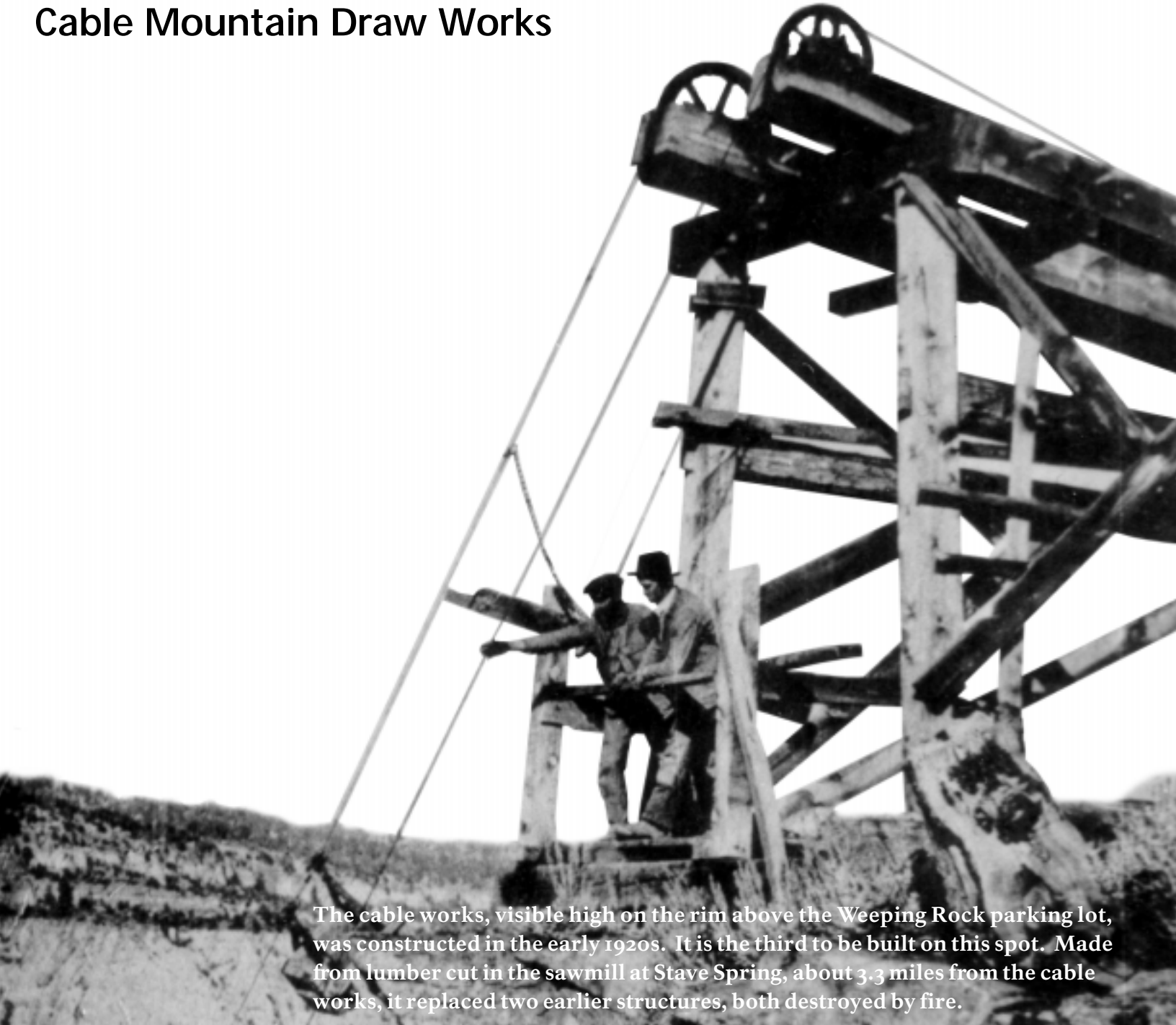




Cable Mountain Draw Works



The cable works, visible high on the rim above the Weeping Rock parking lot, was constructed in the early 1920s. It is the third to be built on this spot. Made from lumber cut in the sawmill at Stave Spring, about 3.3 miles from the cable works, it replaced two earlier structures, both destroyed by fire.

The Pioneers Arrive

Mormon pioneers first settled in Zion Canyon in 1862, when they established the town of Springdale. Unfortunately for the settlers, the canyon floor offered only poor-quality cottonwood for use in construction. Good timber was available on nearby mesa tops, but the settlers had no effective way to bring lumber down to the valley. They had to haul

lumber by wagon from as far away as Arizona’s Kaibab Forest, a trip that could take up to two weeks. The solution was not to come until 1901.

A Prophecy Fulfilled?

A historic diary states that, during a visit to the area in 1863, Mormon leader Brigham Young proclaimed that the timber would one day come down off the cliffs “like a hawk flies.” Eventually, these words captured the imagination of a young man named David Flanigan. By 1898, Flanigan had set out to fulfill what he regarded as a true prophecy.

Flanigan’s task was a difficult one; although he recognized that a cable works might provide the solution to the problem, he was unable to obtain financial backing to construct one. Flanigan therefore experimented with other means to lower lumber. One experiment involved dropping a large log into sand at the base of the cliff. The log shattered into kindling.

Given his financial situation, Flanigan set out to prove the potential of his cable system using a wire rather than the more expensive cable. He rigged this wire to run down the canyon to tower-like wooden structures that stood in the area of what is now the Weeping Rock parking lot.

This process required considerable trial-and-error, but in August of 1901 Flanigan succeeded in transporting test loads down the cliff. These loads included 25,000 barrel staves that Flanigan and his brothers had split from trees in the vicinity of Stave Spring. The spring got its name from this activity. Transportation via the cable took about 2 1/2 minutes, a vast improvement over the one to two weeks needed to transport loads by wagon.



Stave Spring Sawmill 1905

The Sawmill at Stave Spring

Flanigan searched in vain for financial backers to build a sawmill. Fortunately, sawmills of the day were often relatively small and portable, so an existing mill could be moved to Cable Mountain. In 1904, Flanigan purchased the Rube Jolley sawmill, which had been operating near Mt. Carmel.

Flanigan moved this steam-driven mill to a good stand of timber in the vicinity of Stave Spring. The spring probably supplied water needed to run the mill, but it may not always have been sufficient. The diary of William Flanigan, David’s

brother, mentions that snow was sometimes melted for use in running the equipment.

Once the mill was established, several families moved to the location. The operation, however, was not particularly profitable, in part because the mill had been in poor condition and required substantial repairs. So, in 1907, Flanigan sold the mill and cable works to the Gifford, Crawford, and Stout families. David Lemmon purchased the operation in 1914, eventually moving the mill to Lemmon Spring, where it was later dismantled.

Riding the Cable

Riding the cable to the top required only that one dangle 2000 feet in the air. Riding to the bottom, clutching the cable and a load of lumber, could be considerably more exciting, in part because it could be *very* fast if the person operating the brake failed to slow the descent.

William Flanigan’s diary reports that the cable’s first living passenger was the Flanigan’s dog, who

made the trip in 1901. William’s diary notes that afterward, the dog was “real scart.” The cable’s first human passenger was a young surveyor named Quimby Stewart, who rode the cable to the bottom in 1910. Following this, some of the workers at the mill used the cable as a means to get to and from work.

The Final Chapter

Lumber cut in the Stave Spring mill and transported by the cable was used in constructing many local buildings, including homes in the town of Springdale. The last major use of the cable works was in 1924, when it carried lumber used in

building the original Zion Lodge. After about 1925, little usable timber remained on the mesa. For the sake of public safety, the National Park Service removed the cable in 1930; but the cable works frame is still visible today.



The original Zion Lodge, 1929